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OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM  
DE RUEHML #4734 3210808  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3952  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE 9474  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 2962  
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHHMUNS/COMSOCOPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 004734

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP, PM, S/CT, AND EAP/MTS  
USPACOM ALSO FOR FPA HUSO AND J5  
SECDEF/OSD/ISA/AP (TOOLAN/BAILEY)  
JOINT STAFF/J5 (WILKES/ROBINSON/CLEMMONS)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2016  
TAGS: PTER MARR MASS MOPS MCAP PREL RP  
SUBJECT: NOVEMBER 17 UPDATE ON JOLO OPERATIONS

REF: MANILA 4660 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: (U) Pol/C Scott Bellard for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C/REL AUS) The ongoing Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) operation to capture or kill the Jemaah Islamiyah and Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) leadership on the southern Mindanao island of Jolo is ending its 16th week. Khadaffy Janjalani, Dulmatin, and Umar Patek are now believed in the northeastern quadrant of the island, while Abu Sulaiman is thought to be in south central Jolo. AFP troops clashed with a four-section Abu Sayyaf contingent on November 12 in the vicinity of Mount Urot; this group may have been bodyguards for some of the high value targets. The ASG quickly broke contact and fled. Although the ASG normally tries to recover its casualties and weapons from the battlefield, they left behind one dead, as well as an M-16 rifle.

¶2. (C/REL AUS) The AFP leadership remains stoutly committed to keeping up the pressure. The Task Force Comet Commander, Brigadier General Ruben Rafael, in a command conference told his assembled officers, "If you want to go home by Christmas, get all the HVTs." Rafael and Lieutenant General Cedo, the Western Mindanao Commander, have both firmly ruled out the possibility of a Christmas cease-fire. To date, the AFP has suffered 22 killed and 103 wounded in the operation.

¶3. (C/REL AUS) Since the August onset of "Operation Ultimatum," the Philippine Navy, backed up by U.S. intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance support has conducted over 3400 maritime interdictions. Intelligence reports indicate that the terrorists are acutely aware of the naval presence and are searching for a way to elude the blockade. Commander Garcia, the commander of the Philippine Navy's Task Force 62 maintaining the maritime cordon around Jolo, has commented that smuggling and illegal fishing activity have dropped off markedly. Now vessels routinely queue up to be searched by the Philippine Navy, he reported.  
KENNEY